AN EPISTLE OF THE MOSTE

myghty & redouted Prince Henry the. viii. by the grace of God Kyng of England and of Fraunce, lorde of Irelande, defender of the Faithe, and supreme heed of the churche of England, nexte vnder Christe, writen to the Emperours maiestie, to all Christen Princes, and to all those that trewly and syncerely professe Christes religion.

IN THIS EPISTLE BOTHE
the causes are playnely declared, why the Kyn-
ges hyghenes owght neyther to sende nor go to
the Councill indicted at Mincence, and also how
perylouse a thinge it is for all suche as
profesle the trewe doctrine
of Christ, to come
thether.

HEREVNTO ALSO IS AN-
nexed the Protestation made the last yere by the
Kynges hyghenes, his holle Counsayle and cler-
gye, as touchinge the Counsille indi-
cted at Mantua &c.

¶ Rede bothe o Christen Reader, truthe is co-
mynge home, longe afore beynge in captyuytye,
steppe forth and meete her by the waye: yf thou
see her presente, embrace hir, and shewe thy selfe
gladde of her retourne.

HENRY THE, VIII, BY THE grace of God kynge of Englande and of Fraunce &c. ſaluteth the Emperour, Chriſten princes, and all true Chriſten men, deſyringe peace and Concorde amonges them.

WHERE as not lõg ſithens a boke came forthe in our and all oure counſailes names, whyche bothe cõteyned many cauſes, why we refuſed the Councylle, than by the byſchoppe of Romes vſurped power fyrſte indycted atte Mantua, to be kepte the .xxiii. daye of May, after prorroged to Nouembre, noo place appoynted where it ſchulde be kepte. And where as the ſame boke dothe ſufficiently proue, that our cauſe coulde take no hurt,

neyther with any thynge doone or decreed in suche a company of addicte men to one secte, nor in any other councill callyd by his vsurped power, we thynke it nothynge necessarie, so ofte to make newe protestations, as the byshoppe of Rome and his courtes by subtiltie & craft, do inuent ways to mock the worlde by newe pretensed generall councilles. Yet not withstandynge bicause that some thynges haue nowe occurred, eyther vpon occasion giuen vs, by chaunge of the place, or els through other considerations, whiche nowe beynge knowen to the worlde, maye doo moche good, we thought we shulde do, but euen as that loue enforseth vs, whiche we owe vnto Christis faythe and relygion, to adde this epistell: And yet we protest, that we neither put forth

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that boke, neyther yet we wold this epistle to be set afore it, that therby we shulde seme lesse to desyre a generall Councille, thanne any other prince or potentate, but rather more desirous of it, so it were free for all partes, and vniuersal. And further we desyre all good princis, potentatis, and people, to esteme and think that no prince wold more willyngly be present at suche a council than we, suche a one, we meane, as we speake of in our protestation, made concernynge the councill of Mantua. Truely as our forefathers inuented nothynge more holyer than generalle Councilles, vsed as they ought to be, so there is almoste noo thing, that way do more hurt to the Christian common welthe, to the faith, to our religion, than general councils, if they be abused to lukes,

to gaynes, to the eſtablyſchement of errours. They be called generall, & euen by theyr name do admonyſche vs, that all Chriſten men, which do diſcent in any opinion, may in them openly, frankly, and without feare of punyſchement or diſpleaſure, ſay their mynde. For ſeing ſuch thinges as are decreed in generall councils, touche egally all men that gyue aſſent therunto, it is mete that euery man, maye boldely ſaye there, that he thynketh. And verylye we ſuppoſe, that it ought not to be callyd a generall councylle, where alonly thoſe men are harde, whiche are determyned for euer, in all poyntes, to defende the poppyſche parte, and to arme them ſelfe to fyght in the byſchoppe of Romes quarelle, though it were agaynſte god and his ſcriptures. It is no generall Councill, neyther

neyther it oughte to be callyd gene=
rall, where the same menne be onely
aduocates & aduersaries, the same
accused and iuges. No it is against
the lawe of nature, eyther that we
shulde condescende to so vnresona=
ble a lawe agaynste our selfes, ey=
ther that we shulde suffre our selfes
to be lefte without all defence, and
beinge oppressed with greatteste in=
iuries, to haue no refuge to succour
our selfes at. The bishop of Rome
and his, be our great ennies, as we
and all the worlde maye welle per=
ceyue by his doinges. He desyreth
nothynge more than our hurte, and
the destruction of our realme: doo
not we than violate the iudgement
of nature, yf we gyue hym power
and auctoritie to be our iudge? His
pretended honour fyrste gotten by
superstition, after encreased by vi=

olence, and other wayes, as euylle as that: his power sette vppe by pretense of religion, in dede, bothe agaynst religion, and also contrary to the worde of god: his primacye, borne by the ignorancie of the worlde, nourysshed by the ambition of byshops of Rome, defended by places of Scripture, falsely vnderstande. These. iii. thynges we say, whiche are fallen with vs, and are like to fall in other realmes shortly, shall they not be establysshed agein, if he maye decyde our cause as hym lysteth? If he maye at his pleasure oppresse a cause mooste righteouse, and set vp his, moste againe truth? Certaynely he is very blynde, that seeth not, what ende we maye loke for of our controuersies, if such our ennemye maye gyue the sentence. We desyre, if it were in anye wyse

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possible, a council, where some hope may be, that those thynges, shal be restored, whiche nowe being depraue, are lyke, if they be not amended, to be the vtter ruine of christen religion. And as we do desyre suche a councyll, and thynke it mete, that all men in all theyr prayers, shulde craue and desyre it of god: euen soo we think it perteyneth vnto our office, to prouyde bothe that these popishe subtilties hurte none of our subiectes, and also to admonyshe other Christen princis, that the byshoppe of Rome maye not by theyr consent, abuse the auctoritie of kinges, eyther to the extinguyshing of the true preaching of scripture (that nowe beginneth to spring, to grow, and spred abrode, either to the troublyng of princis liberties, to the diminyshinge of kynges auctorities,

and to the great blemysshe of theyr
prncely maiestie. We dout nothing
but a reder not parciall, wyll soone
approue suche thinges, as we write
in the treatise folowynge, not soo
moche for oure excuse, as that the
worlde may perceyue bothe the son-
drye deceytes, craftes, & subtilties
of the papistes, and also, how moch
we desyre, that controuersies in re-
lygion maye ones be taken awaye.
All that we said there of Mantua,
maye here well be spoken of Vin-
cence. They do almoste agree in all
poyntes. Neyther it is lyke, that
there woll be any more at this Con-
cille at Vincence, than were the last
yere at Mantua. Trewelye he is
worthy to be deceyued, that beynge
twyse mocked, woll not beware the
thyrde tyme. If any this laste yere
made forthe towarde Mantua, and
being

beinge halfe on theyr waye, thanne perceyued, that they hadde taken vppon them that iourney in vaine, we do not thynke them so foolysshe, that they woll hereafter ryde farre oute of towne to be mocked. The tyme also, and the state of thynges is suche, that matters of Religyon maye rather nowe be broughte farther in trouble, as other thynges are, than be commodiously intreated of, and decyded. For where as in maner the hole worlde is after such sorte troublyd with warres, so incombred with the greatte preparacyons that the Turke maketh, can there be any manne so agaynste the setlynge of relygyon, that he wolle thynke this tyme mete for a generall Councill? vndoubtedly it is mete that such controuersies, as we haue with the byshoppe of Rome, be ta-

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ken as they are, that is moch greatter, than that they maye eyther be discussed in this soo troublesome a tyme, or elles be commytted vnto proctours, without oure greate ieoperdie, all be it the tyme were neuer so quiete. What other prynces wyl do, we can not tell, but we wyl neither leaue our realme at this tyme, neyther we wyl truste any proctour with our cause, wherin the holle stay and welthe of our realme standeth, but rather we wyll be atte the handlynge therof our selfe. For except both an other iudge be agreed vpon for those matters, and also a place more commodiouse be prouided, for the debating of our causes, all be it all other thynges were as we wolde haue theym, yet maye we laufully refuse to come or sende any to this pretended Councyl. We wol

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in noo caſe make hym our arbyter, whiche not many yeres paſte, oure cauſe not hard, gaue ſentēce ageinſt vs. We woll that ſuche doctrine, as we, folowyng the ſcripture, do profeſſe, ritely to be examinid, diſcuſſid, and to be brought to ſcripture, as to the onely touche ſtoone of true lernynge. We wyll not ſuffre them to be abolyſſhed, ere euer they be dyſcuſſed, ne to be oppreſſid, before they be knowen: moche leſſe we wyl ſuffre them to be troden downe beinge ſo clerely trewe. No, as there is no iote in ſcripture, but we wolle defende it, thoughe it were with ieoperdie of oure lyfe, and perylle of this our Realme: ſoo is there noo thynge, that doth oppreſſe this doctrine, or obſcure it, but we woll be at continualle warre therwith. As we haue abrogated all olde popiſhe tra-

traditions in this our realme, whiche eyther dyd helpe his tyrannye, or increase his pride: so if the grace of God forsake vs not, we will wel foresee, that no newe naughty traditions be made with our consente, to bynde vs or our realme. If men wyll not be wyllyngly blinde, they shall easily see euen by a due and euident prose in reson, though grace dothe not yet by the worde of Christ enter into them, howe small thauctoritie of the byshop of Rome is, by the laufull denyall of the Duke of Mantua for the place. For yf the byschoppe of Rome dydde ernestly intende to kepe a councyll at Mantua, and hath power by the lawe of God, to calle princis to what place hym lyketh: why hathe he not also auctoritie, to chose what place hym lysteth? The Byschop chose Mantua,

tua, the Duke kepte hym out of it. If Paule the bysshoppe of Romes auctozitie be so great, as he pzetendeth, why coulde not he compel Federicus, Duke of Mantua, that the Councylle myghte be kept there? The duke wolde not suffre it. No, he forbadde hym his towne. Howe chaunceth it, that here excommunicacyons flye not abzoode? Why dothe he not punysshe this Duke? why is his power, that was wonte to be moze than fulle, here emptie? wonte to be moze than all, here nothynge? Dothe he not call men in vayne to a Councylle, yf they that comme at his callynge, be excluded the place, to the whiche he callethe theym? May e not kynges iustely refuse to come at his call, whan the Duke of Mantua may denye him the place, that he choseth? If other

pzinces

pynces order hym as the Duke of Mantua hathe doone, what place shall be lefte hym, where he maye kepe his generall Councill? Again, If Pynces haue gyuen hym this auctoritie, to calle a Councille, is hit not necessarye, that they gyue hym also, all those thynges, without the whiche he canne not exercyse that his power? Shall he call men, and woll ye let hym fynde no place to calle them vnto? Truely he is not wonte to appoynte one of his owne Cyties, a place to keepe the council in. No, the good man is so faythefull and frendely towarde other, that seldome he desyreth pynces to be his gestis. And admitte he shulde calle vs to one of his cityes, shulde we safely walke within the walles of such our enmies towne? were it mete for vs there to dyscusse contro-

controuersyes of Relygyon, or to kepe vs out of our ennemyes trappes: meete to studye for the defence of suche doctrine as we profesſe, or rather howe we myghte in suche a thronge of perylles be in sauegarde of oure lyfe: Well, in this one acte the byshoppe of Rome hath declared, that he hath none auctorytye vppon places in other mennes dominyons, and therfore yf he promyse a Councille in any of those, he promyseth that that is in an other man to perfourme, and so may he decepue vs agayne. Nowe if he calle vs to one of his owne townes, we be afrayde to be at suche an hostes table. we saye, better to ryse a hungred, then to goo thense with oure bellyes fulle. But they saye, the place is founde, we neede noo more seke where the Councill shall

be kepte. As who saythe, that, that chaunced at Mantua, maye not also chaunce at Vyncence. And as thoughe it were very lyke, that the Venecians, menne of suche wysedome, shoulde not bothe foresee, and feare also that, that the wyse Duke of Mantua semed to feare. Certes, whanne we thynke vppon the state, that the Venecians be in nowe, hit seemeth noo verye lykely thynge, that they woll eyther leaue Vincence, theyr Cytye, to so many nations, withoute some great garrison of souldyers, or elles that they beinge elles where, so sore charged all redy, wyll nowe norysshe an armye there. And if they wolde, dothe not Paulus hym selfe graunt, that it shulde be an euyll presydent, and an euyll exaumple, to haue an armed Councille? How so euer it shal be, we

be, we moste hartely desyre you, that ye woll vouchesafe, to rede those thinges, that we wrote this last yere touchynge the Mantuan Counsille. For we nothynge doubte, but you, of youre equytye, wyll stande on our syde agaynste theyr subtyltye and fraudes, and iudge (except we be deceyued) that we in this busynesse, neyther gaue so moche to oure affectyons, neyther without greate and mooste iuste causes, refused theyr Councilles, theyr Censures, and Decrees. Whyther these our wrytynges please all menne, or noo, we thynke, we oughte not to passe moche. No, if that, that indifferentely is wrytten of vs, may please indifferente reders, our desyre is accomplysshed. The false and mystakyng of thynges, by men partyall, shall moue vs nothynge, ozelles

ozelles very lytell. If we haue ſaid aughte agaynſte the deceytes of the Byſſhop of Rome, that maye ſeme ſpoken to ſharpely, we prayе you, impute it to the hatredde we bare vnto vyces, and not to any euyll wyll that we bare hym. Noo, that he, and all his, maye perceyue, that we are rather at ſtryfe with his vyces, than with hym, and his: oure prayer is, bothe that it maye pleaſe god, at the laſte to open their eyes, to make ſofte theyr harde hartes, and that they ones maye with vs (theyr owne glorye ſet aparte) ſtudy to ſet forth the euerlaſtynge glorye, of the euerlaſtynge God.

¶ Thus myghtye Emperoure Fare ye moſte hartely well, and ye Chriſten Prynces, the pylors and ſtaye of Chriſtendome, Fare ye hartely well. Alſo all ye, what people ſo euer

euer ye are, whiche doo desyre, that the Gospel and glory of Christ may florysshe, Fare ye hartely well.

¶ Gyuen at London oute of oure Palace at Westmynster, the eyghte of Apryll, the nyne and twentye yere of oure reygne.

GRATIS
BR. MUS

LONDINI IN AEDIBVS
THOMAE BERTHE-
LETI REGII IM=
PRES=
SORIS. EXCVS.

ANNO. M. D. XXXVIII.

CVM PRIVILEGIO.

See Ames's Acct. of Edn. 1537 No. C
P. 430